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ABSTRACT

This bulletin describes a set of general guidelines for developing contingency plans that prepare school systems to cope with expected and unexpected disruptions in the educational process. Typically, contingency plans are prepared to anticipate consequences of school desegregation, natural disasters, bomb threats, or mass demonstrations. The outline included in this bulletin constitutes a minimum set of criteria that can be used to develop contingency plans suitable for any school system, depending on specific needs. (Author)

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# Technical Assistance Bulletin

## Contingency Planning

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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### Summary

This bulletin describes a set of general guidelines for developing contingency plans which prepare school systems to cope with expected and unexpected disruptions in the educational process. Typically, contingency plans are prepared to anticipate consequences of school desegregation, natural disasters, bomb threats, or mass demonstrations. The outline included in this bulletin constitutes a minimum set of criteria which can be used to develop contingency plans suitable for any school system, depending on specific needs.

### The Problem

In the past decade, the problems of violence, vandalism, and disruption in the schools have become more and more severe. These factors have led to the development of school security programs that did not exist 20 years ago. How to prepare and deal with crisis situations--demonstrations, bomb threats, school desegregation problems, or serious crimes--has not been examined by many schools. Without some kind of plan for dealing with a crisis, a school can be thrown into turmoil or chaos when a crisis does arise and not handle the situation quickly or effectively.

### The Solution

Establishing a contingency plan is essential for schools and school districts to ensure the continued safety and security of the schools and their inhabitants during a crisis. Attached is an outline for preparing such plans.

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SOURCE DOCUMENT

School Security Contingency Planning

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SOURCE DOCUMENT

# SCHOOL SECURITY CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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SCHOOL SECURITY CONTINGENCY PLANNING

I. WHAT IS IT?

A. Definition - Planning to cope with the expected and the unexpected (i.e., emergencies) in school-related matters.

B. Properties:

- Clear and concise language
- Statement of roles of persons involved
- Division of responsibilities among major participants
- Clarification of relationships among participants
- Guidance to decisionmakers
- Constant updating.

II. WHO IS INVOLVED?

A. All participants and possible participants in any response to school problems should be involved in the planning and development of school contingency plans. These include school administrators (central office and local school), teachers, students, school security force, police, parents, neighborhood or community resources (minority and majority), and external professionals.

B. The school security director should have primary responsibility and leadership in the development of the school security plan.

III. HOW IS IT USED?

A. Community Relations Service (CRS) experience and the experience of others indicates dry runs are most effective for making the contingency plan second nature. The dusty, old plan hidden in a locked, bottom file drawer untouched by human hands since it was first developed is not useful. The plan needs to be current, and updated.

IV. CONTENTS

A. Prevention

The development of a school security contingency plan is by itself a major factor in preventing problems. However, this section on prevention deals specifically with those measures which should be dealt with in order that problems not arise.

The following is a listing of the underlying or precipitating factors of problems that occur in schools. In developing a contingency plan, each of these factors must be considered on a school-by-school basis in order to determine the weight to be given to each and the nature of the remedies.

At a time of significant social change, for example, school desegregation, the importance of these problems becomes magnified. Only by dealing openly, honestly, and thoroughly with each factor or potential problem can the school system be considered prepared for its role in both preventing and responding to problems surrounding the education process.

Early diagnosis is imperative in order to effectively recognize problems and thus deal with them effectively prior to the time of their escalating to dangerous proportions. Some of the most common factors which underlie or precipitate student unrest and problems in school settings are:

- Uneven and/or poorly defined disciplinary process.
- Lack of minorities in such positions as administrators, teachers, counselors, secretaries, etc.
- Discrimination in extracurricular activities, such as cheerleaders, clubs, etc.
- A curriculum that does not serve the needs of the student body.
- Few, if any, minority students in student government.
- Racially coded school customs, such as school songs, flags, etc.
- Failure to involve parents in the problems of the schools, both minority and majority.
- Insensitivities and lack of cultural awareness of administrators, teachers, aides, secretaries, etc.
- Lack of counseling programs, adequately trained personnel in such programs, and counselors who fully value and properly assess the potential of minority students.
- A hostile environment toward minorities in the schools.
- Failure to disseminate information regarding school programs, security, etc.
- Uneven policy handling of disruptive events when called into a crisis situation.
- Physical attacks on members of one race, such as gang attacks.
- Extortion.
- Resentment against interracial dating.

- Classroom or program segregations, such as accomplished through tracking.

- Inappropriate placement or dumping of minority and non-English speaking students in special education classes.

- Drug use and sales.

There are other factors, external to the schools, which underlie school conflict and racial unrest:

- Hostile, negative environment surrounding the school.

- Harassment at bus pickups, along bus routes, or near schools.

- Discriminatory or uneven police response, protection and attitude.

- Racial signs and slogans.

- One-way busing placed on minority population.

- Failure to widely disseminate accurate and balanced information on major matters of interest or concern in the community which affect the schools.

- Slanted or inflammatory reporting and editorializing.

In analyzing these potential problems and assessing their relative importance, school officials, especially school security directors, are conducting a needs assessment. If the above listed conditions exist, something must be done about them. The school security director and others concerned about fights, disruptions, extortions, muggings, and similar acts of violence at schools must see that the conditions breeding such problems are remedied. Otherwise, the school security director will be playing the fruitless task of "putting out fires" during the school year.

Some internal remedies to the schools having one or more of the above noted conditions include:

- A truly integrated school system, i.e., an affirmative action plan with results.

- A clear, balanced, and even-handed student discipline code, developed with significant input of administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

- An educational climate conducive to positive interaction between minority and nonminority students and between students, teachers, and administrators.

- Student participation in school government on a bi-racial basis.

- Student integration throughout school.

- Strong partnership among schools, parents, and the community.

- An effective school security system.

The contingency plan will also focus on remedies to correct those problems external to the schools. In response to the anticipated problems outlined above, the school department under the leadership of the school security director would outline those actions contemplated, including:

- Positive and effective leadership from all segments of the community in creating a positive environment around the schools and, where desegregation is occurring, a climate of toleration and compliance with the law.

- The necessary law enforcement action to stabilize protest activity within acceptable limits, to swiftly apprehend violators of the law, and to provide equal protection to all citizens.

- A public information program to provide the necessary information in an accurate and balanced presentation, especially when controversies surround the school or the community in which the school is located.

B. Response

Even the best of plans may fail and breakdowns will occur. How serious a breakdown becomes depends on uncontrollable events as well as those over which school security forces have control. The most commonly experienced problems include those which will be detailed below. In planning for response, the key is to have a response plan ready for each eventuality, the roles spelled out in detail, and personnel trained to carry out specific assignment. In times of emergencies, individuals often are beset by a paralysis of inaction. Plans which have been developed and particularized accompanied by dry runs and regular updating will solidify the roles to be played and action to be taken during an emergency. In this way the paralysis of action will be minimized as a factor. For each of the major categories of problems to be anticipated, some counteracting strategies or actions are suggested below.

- Potential Problem: Lack of coordinated police/school response whenever it is necessary to call in police.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: A written memorandum of agreement regarding police/school responsibilities and roles at times of school disruption is useful. The two officials responsible for developing this plan are the superintendent of schools and the chief of police. The operational people will be the chief of school security and the school liaison resource officer. This plan must be consistently reviewed, updated, and reissued, especially with the expected turnover of personnel. CRS has developed a brochure on the development of such agreements.

- Potential Problem: Calling in uniformed police to a school disruption either too soon or too late.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: CRS has developed a two-page checklist to consult before calling in police. Basically, it emphasizes the responsibility of the school to utilize its resources to deal with school problems rather than being too quick to rely upon police.

- Potential Problem: Disruptive behavior in front of schools or along bus routes, such as demonstrations, picketing, and hostile gatherings.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: A compilation of appropriate statues which can be used as tools to deal with such actions can be made. In this way, when either school personnel or police first attempt to persuade the people to disperse, the appropriate statutes can be cited, indicating that the statutes will be enforced. In Boston, this strategy eliminated almost all of the problems in front of schools and along bus routes.

- Potential Problem: Fights on bus, rock throwing at buses, buses getting lost, accidents happening to buses.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: Two-way communications system on buses will provide the necessary access to immediate police or other emergency assistance as needed.

- Potential Problem: Fights in school, verbal abuse, intoxicated youths or those on drugs, sit-ins, school walkouts, a melee in the cafeteria, a disruptive student in classroom.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: Plans detailing how each type of incident is to be handled must be developed which delineate such strategies as isolating and controlling the particular disruption; curtailing movement in the school by postponing class change and eliminating bells until the threat of escalation ceases to exist; securing the outside doors from trespassers; controlling the public address and intercom system; differentiating between actions subject to arrest or to disciplinary procedures; and mobilizing those personnel needed to handle the disruption.

- Potential Problem: Major disorders.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: A special contingency plan should be developed pertaining just to major disorders. In Baltimore, for example, the chief of school security developed a two-page plan for such an emergency. In Boston, the events of the first year of desegregation dictated the development of a contingency plan anticipating disorders of the same nature as the previous year. The development of the plan, along with publicity as to the state of preparedness, did much to discourage disorders and assure a relatively peaceful school opening.

- Potential Problem: The closing of school for subsequent days and/or the early closing of school.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: In general, schools should not be closed either early or for subsequent days. However, there are circumstances when an exception must be made. Planning must be done as to delineating the required circumstances or conditions. The consequences of that action must be considered, such as the transportation impact, the potential problem of roving gangs of youth, unavailability of the youth to work through the problems, and absent parents.

- Potential Problem: Rumors, inaccurate information, and other communications problems.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: Plans to immediately establish a rumor control and information center at a central location with access to information, a means to verify rumor, and role of dispensing information to the public at large, should be made.

- Potential Problem: False fire alarms, the pressure of unauthorized persons in school, theft, and shakedowns or extortions.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: The school must be prepared to handle each of these problems. Where false fire alarms are a problem, a delayed signal system set up in concert with the fire department can be effective. A sign-in/sign-out system, along with an identification tag to be worn by all visitors, will help to limit, if not exclude, unauthorized persons in the school.

- Potential Problem: Lack of skilled personnel to handle problems.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: A professional school security force is needed in the school systems of today. It must combine the ability to do excellent, quick, and professional assessments of problems, with the professional skill of handling problems ranging from threats to a teacher and theft to major disruptions. Such a force must be screened properly; trained in the skills needed to perform its task; paid at a level commensurate with the level of responsibility and skill needed (i.e., a teacher or policeman); and have the necessary support to carry out its role. The two-page CRS paper entitled "Planning to Implement a School Security Program" may help those systems considering a move to establish such a force.

- Potential Problem: Problems from neighborhood groups, toughs, and gangs.

  Corresponding Strategies/Actions: Outreach programs in which youth workers are employed to deflect illegal or disruptive behavior into acceptable and legitimate patterns of conduct can be utilized.

## IV. SUMMARY

The lack of contingency planning has a major adverse impact on the response to emergencies. Recognizing the possibility and potential for violence as well as for other emergencies in the schools and acknowledging the necessity of being prepared, plans can be made so that the avoidable problems can be prevented and the disruptions which do occur can be dealt with immediately and effectively.